

Harold Weisberg Hyattstown, Md. 20734 7/9/66

Dear Belfrage,

When I got home from Washington last evening and hurriedly read your letter of the first prior to taking my wife to town for the weekly grocery shopping I was excited, for I would indeed like very much to go to the IOJ meeting. But the more I think of it the more I feel I must at least tentatively say no. Frankly, had I not been too tired to answer last night by the end of a two-hour phone call from California from another working on the same subject but in a different way, my response would have been an ecstatic "yes".

Because I really, would like very much to go and because you are kind to suggest even the possibility, I should explain.

Right now I believe I am doing worthwhile things and accomplishing something. Sitting on a rear pew, in silence, and listening to sermons that, with my recent history, I may not agree with, is not something I'd enjoy. It was not alone in the US that I could not get my book published. More publishers in Britain said "no" than the average book is offered to in the US. Must be about 20 now. In Germany, a single publisher has sat upon it for a year, and in all this time I have been able to prompt but a single meaningless letter from him. Der Spiegel has been blowing hot and cold for about eight months, with still no answer. In France, perhaps a half-dozen agents declined the subject, and the single major publisher who was interested broke his agreement in such a shabby way the French Embassy provided me with free legal counsel. No response at all from Denmark. Several Japanese agents didn't even answer either, and the US representatives of Japanese publishers were bored, until about three weeks ago when the departing second man in Mainichi, after two months, told me they sent a copy to Japan. The USSR cultural counsellor, in response to a letter and a phone call, invited me to see him but when I arrived at the appointed time I found a pretense he was suddenly and unexpectedly called from the office for the rest of the day. When I said I'd sit and wait until an assistant was free, he made an equally unexpected "return," saw me without happiness and without even inviting me to sit and explained that they have a policy of not printing what is not earlier printed in the land of the author. To my obvious questions he had only unembarrassed answers that meant nothing. Finally he said that, once printed in the US, the USSR might be interested. Would I then receive compensation, I asked? He replied they might and they might not pay me. If they do, it turns out, I'll be able to spend the royalties only in Moscow. And in Czechoslovakia, where the agency was frankly excited by the book, in six months nothing has happened...I don't think I'd be comfortable sitting in silence, and I don't think I'd be appreciated were I to speak, especially were I to read my unanswered letter to the Minister of Culture of the USSR, copy to the Embassy.

Were there to be a genuine dialogue, would it be possible to discuss the denial of the rights of writers and the various means by which they are suppressed, I'd really want very much to go. But with the subject matter of my book and with what it really says, as you alone of the reviewers seem to have understood, I'd be an uncomfortable if not an unhappy guest, especially when I sat and let my mind wander over what I might be doing were I not working at home instead.

Also, I am so broke that paying my transportation would not finance it for me. We have had no income for two and a half years. I began this in debt and my obligations are for me now astronomical. Right now it looks as though I'll have reason to go back to press shortly, yet I haven't paid the printer for the first 5,000, and cannot until the distributor's begin to pay me. Although right now it looks that by the time of the meeting I'll have some income from the book, we have sunk in it the equivalent of about \$75,000 in time and money, the time at merely minimum Guild rates and the money all to be repaid and an incon siderable sum that I think the book, with a big success, cannot make. That money I'd have to use for the other costs is really the

money of others.

Against this I have to measure what I might do with that time. What I am doing now is constructive. It is doing more than selling my book, and I think it has meaning. Were I to get two to three weeks clear, I could finish the first sequel, "Three Shells", that will in itself be another shocker and of a different kind. It goes forward from Whitewash, really from the Postscript, and will tell not so much whose hand was on the brush, for there were many, but how it was accomplished. I think it will address itself to the most evil single force in our national life as nothing else has, and I grudge every minute I must take from it. All the time, in the back of my mind, is the suspended work on a nonorganic sequel that I may have mentioned to you, "A Tiger to Ride", hinted in the last paragraph of your review, which I could finish in two months had I nothing else to do in them and which I now doubt if I can finish in a year. When I set what is enflaming the world, I want very much to do this, but even now I cannot, and any diversions will delay it that much more.

So, unless you think I can do something worthwhile at the IOJ meeting, I'll decline. If you think I can do something worth doing, I'd like to be there.

Let me tell you what has now happened to Whitewash. Three weeks ago I fear I stunned Sally and some of her friends by declining what I found to be an unacceptable offer from Fawcett. Less than a month ago the first distributor got his first 500 copies. He phoned for 500 more five days ago. Three weeks ago the west-coast distributor got 500 copies. Ten days ago he had not a single copy in San Francisco. Yesterday he phoned for an additional 500 copies and said he may soon want another 1000 (which I do not have). Apparently all 500 went to Frisco. Last Wednesday a San Francisco radio station phoned me to see if I'd talk to their audience by phone for about 10 minutes. It began at 2 a.m. our time. The ten minutes stretched into two hours during which the switchboard was jumping like mad. It was so exciting, I could feel it this far away... Two weeks ago I was on the Long John Nebel show on NBC in New York. I faced this friend of Bill Buckley's, Victor Lasky and one Kevin O'Dougherty, an executive of the so-called Conservative Party but really a little to the right of Goldwater. It was a ball. The studio was flooded with telegrams while I was there, and the character of the telegrams was such they had to stop reading them cold. Not a single one against me, and most protesting those terrible (excuse the expression) people. This is what sold out the supply the distributor in New York had. Those miserable creatures were so low (and I had accomplished so much more than I'd ever hoped) I just let the show peter out after three and a half of the five scheduled hours, holding back ample fresh material for another show. They didn't even sign me off! Not a good night on the air or in the studio! They just slunk off, all three of them.

This coming week, I have a speech to a college group, to a joint meeting of two Rotary clubs (to which a Senator has been invited) and a program on WNEW-TV in NYC. Possibly there will be a taping session Monday for the Educational TV network, which wanted me in New York the same day as WNEW and which I now think will do more than one show. Sometime this week BBC is coming up for a five-minute thing, TV. The following week I have four hours of talk on the largest radio station in Philadelphia (where Arlen Specter - see The Doctors and the Autopsy) is District Attorney) to end at 2 a.m. and the next day a taping session on their TV station. I intend to avoid pulling the plug right now, but if I am opened up on in Philadelphia, with what I now have on its new public official, there will be some real excitement. More than any one man, he did it, and I can prove it much more than I already have. The nasty Knebel piece in LOOK that I've been preparing to answer if the opportunity ever comes and to face the next time I have to has led to some real dirt, all official.

Meanwhile, I want to do what I can to combat the essentially reactionary doctrine of Insepstein and Lane, who are determined to make Earl "arren the goat and upon his shoulders to heap the additional blame of all others, especially J. Edgar Hoover. One of the people working in the field, Salandria, has even dedicated some of his writing to FBI agents! ... Thanks for everything. Sincerely, and with appreciation, Just got cable from Arriba, Madrid, wanting to buy Spanish serialization rights. Referred to London where, fortunately, I have an agent.